Some Errors of H. G. Wells

A Catholic's Criticism of the "Outline of History"

By

RICHARD DOWNEY, D.D.

Melbourne:
William P. Linehan
8 Bourke St.

Some Errors of H. G. Wells

A Catholic's Criticism of the "Outline of History"

By

RICHARD DOWNEY, D.D.

London

Burns Oates & Washbourne Limited

28 Orchard Street W 1 ✣ 8-10 Paternoster Row E C 4

And at Manchester, Birmingham, and Glasgow

1 9 2 1

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/someerrorsofhgwe0000rich

To the Reader

THIS booklet is a revised reprint of three articles which appeared in *The Month* for August, September, and October, 1920. They are republished by kind permission of the editor of *The Month*, to whom the author is indebted for many helpful suggestions. The references throughout to *The Outline of History* are to the edition in two volumes published by George Newnes, Ltd.

R. D.

Some Errors of H. G. Wells

FOR many months the fortnightly parts of Mr. H. G. Wells's *Outline of History* have dazzled the eye and fired the imagination, and, at last, the twenty-fourth and concluding part, bearing on its cover a coloured map of "The United States of the World," has appeared, some few weeks after the publication of a revised edition of the complete work in one volume. The time is opportune, therefore, for a survey of this universal history. The present pamphlet is not meant to be an exhaustive critique, but rather an antidote to some of the chief errors into which it would seem that Mr. Wells has been betrayed by his prevailing bent of mind. For his literary craftsmanship, his art of presentation, his selective judgment, and his courage in attempting such a gigantic task, it is impossible not to have admiration, and on this account it is the more regrettable that he has allowed his preconceived philosophical and religious notions to enter so largely into what purports to be a record of fact. The result is that the outline with which he presents us is, in many places, badly warped.

"The pre-human ancestor was an ape," says Mr. Wells in his errata to Parts I., II., III. He

makes this statement with the confidence of a man who has established it beyond rebuttal. Nor is there any substantial modification of this opinion in the note on this point which he prints in his final errata: "There is too much stress upon the lemur in the account of the ancestry of man. The ancestor of man and the higher apes was probably a ground monkey and not a lemur."[1] It is therefore worth while to examine the evidence on which his statement rests, the more so as the examination throws an interesting sidelight on Mr. Wells's method of handling facts. Chief amongst the anthropological data upon which any judgment as to the simian origin of man must be based are the extant remains of "primeval man," and these are usually divided into three groups:

(I.) Remains supposed to date from the late Pliocene or early Pleistocene epoch (*c.* 550,000 B.C.)—the *Pithecanthropus*, *Eoanthropus*, *Homo Heidelbergensis*, and the Galley Hill man.

(II.) Remains of the *Homo Neanderthalensis*, or *Primigenius* (*c.* 50,000 B.C.).

(III.) Remains of the *Homo sapiens*, or *recens* (*c.* 35,000 B.C.)—Aurignacian, Cro-Magnon, and Grimaldi types.

Mr. Wells's task is to show how the *Homo sapiens* evolved from an ape. He devotes a whole chapter (VIII.) to the Pliocene man of Group I., without shedding the faintest ray of light on his origin. He discourses pleasantly

[1] P. 762

of *Pithecanthropus*, and illustrates his remarks with a picture of the "possible appearance" of *Pithecanthropus*—no mean achievement when we reflect that the entire remains consist of a thigh-bone, two molar teeth, and the top of a skull. What he does not tell his readers, however, is that the *Pithecanthropus* is the discredited harbinger of the whole family of "missing links." Time was when popularizers of "science," following the lead of Haeckel, insisted on the continuous, gradual development of man from the ape through this very *Pithecanthropus*. Thus, Professor Schwalbe in 1909 declared from his chair in the University of Strassburg that "what Darwin missed most of all—intermediate forms between apes and man—has been recently furnished. E. Dubois, as is well known, discovered in 1893, near Trinil in Java, in the alluvial deposits of the River Bengawan, an important form represented by a skullcap, some molars, and a femur. His opinion—much disputed as it has been—that in this form, which he named *Pithecanthropus*, he has found a long-desired transition form is shared by the present writer. Volz says with justice that even if *Pithecanthropus* is not *the* missing link, it is undoubtedly *a* missing link."[1] Since that time, however, anthropologists have pointed out that it is not at all clear that the Java remains belong to the same skeleton, since, though found in the same strata, they were some considerable distance apart. Anatomists, too, have

[1] *Darwin and Modern Science*, pp. 127, 128.

fallen foul of this "intermediate form," many experts pronouncing the thigh-bone purely human and the teeth and skull purely simian. To add to the general confusion, the date of the remains is a very vexed question; and, finally, the whole status of the *Pithecanthropus* has been rudely shaken by the recent discovery of several supposed types of prehistoric man which differ essentially from the *Pithecanthropus*—notably the Piltdown man, at present in course of reconstruction from the remains found in Sussex as recently as 1912. As a "missing link," therefore, the *Pithecanthropus* is pretty generally abandoned; but Mr. Wells, though he has not succeeded in finding another to take its place, holds fast to his faith in the kinship of men and monkeys.

In the next chapter he addresses himself to a consideration of the primitive men represented by Group II. To these we are somewhat abruptly introduced as follows: "In the earlier phase, the third Interglacial period, a certain number of small family groups of men (*Homo Neanderthalensis*), and probably of sub-men (*Eoanthropus*), wandered over the land, leaving nothing but their flint implements to witness to their presence."[1] Certainly in 1857 the top of a skull and a few bones were found in the Neanderthal near Düsseldorf. The abnormal shape of the skull led many to suppose that it represented a hitherto unknown type of man, and this surmise gained support by the subsequent finds of skulls and skeletal parts,

[1] P. 47.

notably in Belgium in 1884, and in Croatia in 1899. These are the facts on which Mr. Wells exercises his brilliant imagination. But what we really want to know is, where did this *Homo Neanderthalensis* come from? The average reader of Mr. Wells's serial gathers the impression that this second type in some mysterious way "evolved" out of the first, and certainly Mr. Wells says nothing to undeceive him. Yet the gulf between these two groups has never been bridged. Thus Mr. E. O. James, in his recent *Introduction to Anthropology* (1919), says: "In our opinion *Pithecanthropus* does not represent either a precursor or an early phase of Neanderthal man, but a development on lines of its own. . . . There is good reason to believe that the Neanderthal type does not represent a development of *Pithecanthropus*."[1] And even if it did, it would not help Mr. Wells in the least, since he admits that after lasting out for more than 200,000 years the "Neanderthaler race" became extinct: "Finally . . . a different human type came upon the scene, and, it would seem, exterminated *Homo Neanderthalensis*."[2] So, in any case, exit the man who was descended from an ape.

Mr. Wells does not seem to have heard of the modern difficulties against his ape-ancestry theory. In the course of an article on "The Evolution of Man and his Mind," in *Science Progress* for July, 1920, Major Thomas Cherry contends that "back teeth" are not "evidence of our simian

[1] P. 12. [2] P. 52.

ancestry, but on the contrary, quite the opposite";[1] that "Man's skin is not a monkey's skin minus the hair. It is far better supplied with sweat glands, and man can thus survive a degree of exposure to the sun which is speedily fatal to a monkey. Man's naked skin is a conspicuous contrast to the condition of all the other primates";[2] and —sad blow to Mr. Wells, with his diagrammatic picture of "foot of man and gorilla"—"the specialized monkey foot may [thus] be ruled out as a stage in the ancestry of man."[3] All this chatter of Mr. Wells about arboreal apes and his highly imaginative descriptions of Pliocene and Neanderthal man are somewhat beside the point, since "no stage in the ancestry of man may have been very like either one or other of these extinct races."[4] We are relieved, therefore, when Mr. Wells turns his attention, and ours, to the new human type, indicated by the third group of remains, the *Homo sapiens*, or *recens*. We are consumed with eagerness to know something of the antecedents of this race; we are thrilled to think that in this chapter Mr. Wells is at last about to solve the knotty problem of our simian ancestry. But all the knowledge that Mr. Wells imparts on this vital question is compressed into one single period: "At present we can only guess where and how, through the slow ages, parallel with the Neanderthal cousin, these first *true men* arose out of some more ape-like progenitor."[5] So,

[1] P. 89. [2] P. 92. [3] P. 77. [4] *Science Progress*, p. 90.
[5] P. 52. Mr. Wells's italics.

after all, when it comes to discussing the origin of the first true men, Mr. Wells is only guessing! But to soften the blow the guess is accompanied by a coloured plate of "Our Neanderthaloid Ancestor." Observe the unobtrusive manner in which Mr. Wells bridges the gulf between Groups II. and III. In a parenthesis, mark you, the extinct *Homo Neanderthalensis*, a type of "nearly human creatures," says Mr. Wells, is suddenly raised to the rank of cousin to the first true men. Mr. Wells is an adept at this kind of logical theft. Having, with the aid of a coloured plate, persuaded the reader that the *Homo Neanderthalensis* was almost human, Mr. Wells proceeds to foist him on to the British public as a *cousin!* To such shifts is the new logic reduced in the interests of the inspiring belief that man is descended from an ape. *Venite adoremus!*

Most of Mr. Wells's earlier chapters are tendential. Wittingly or unwittingly he conveys the impression that a theistic hypothesis is superfluous in any rational interpretation of the universe. From Democritus to the latest rationalist, the favourite method of eliminating the Deity has always been to profess to account for the cosmos by describing the manner in which it has evolved. By a sort of legerdemain, description is substituted for explanation. It is as if we sought to show that a watch need not have had a maker by giving a minute description of the way in which the hands are moved by the internal mechanism. Evolution, says a prominent

rationalist, has made an end of Paleyism. W. G. Ward cleverly illustrates the fallacy of this kind of reasoning by supposing the case of a philosophical mouse imprisoned in a piano, instituting an enquiry into the cause of the music. The sound, it argues, results from the vibration of the strings; the vibration is caused by the blows of the hammers; "and so much at least is evident now—viz., that the sounds proceed not from any external and arbitrary agency—from the intervention, *e.g.*, of any higher will—but from the uniform operation of fixed laws."[1] After the manner of the mouse, Mr. Wells accounts for all existing living beings by the Survival of the Fittest, or as he prefers to call it, the Survival of the Fitter. When asked to account for this survival, he points to Natural Selection, which, he assures us, is an established law. Yet, obviously, as Dr. Flint remarks in his *Theism*, "Natural Selection did not bring about the conditions under which it operates. If the whole earth had been flooded with water only fish would have survived. There is clearly something which Natural Selection cannot account for." As an *ultima ratio* it is a failure. But is it even a law? Mr. Wells writes of it with the full-blooded confidence of the sciolist. He would write less confidently, perhaps, had he read the "Essays in Commemoration of the Centenary of the Birth of Charles Darwin and of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the publication of *The Origin of Species*, edited

[1] *Philosophy of Theism*, Vol. II., pp. 172, 173.

for the Cambridge Philosophical Society and the Syndics of the University Press by Professor Seward, F.R.S." Among the contributors to this volume are Weismann, De Vries, Bateson, Francis Darwin, Thiselton-Dyer, Ernst Haeckel, and other master-exponents of evolution. And Mr. Wells may be surprised to hear that the one subject most hotly discussed by these experts is—Natural Selection. Bateson, for instance, says: "The time is not ripe for the discussion of the Origin of Species. . . . We look on the manner and causation of adapted differentiation as still wholly mysterious."[1] This, however, was written in 1909, and things have moved since then—but not in the direction of the theory favoured by Mr. Wells. Mr. Bourne, in his *Animal Life and Human Progress*, published in 1919, declares that the popular hypothesis, "extinction of the less fit and survival of the fittest, no longer commands the universal assent of zoologists. Indeed, it has been seriously undermined by the discoveries of recent years."[2] Nevertheless, it figures in Mr. Wells's illustrated pages as a doctrine beyond dispute, the basis of the drama "From Microbe to Man."

In the third part of his *History* Mr. Wells says: "This book is not a theological book, and it is not for us to embark upon theological discussion; but it is a part, a necessary and central part, of the history of man to describe the dawn and the development of his religious ideas and

[1] P. 99. [2] P. 56.

their influence upon his activities."[1] Mr. Wells is here entering on a large subject—very much larger than he realizes. Various theories have been put forward by anthropologists to explain the manner of the making of gods by primitive peoples, and of these theories Mr. Wells has the misfortune to select the most unsatisfactory—the abandoned theory of ancestor-worship. Of this theory, Professor Jastrow, after dismissing Tylor's animistic theory, says: "Still less satisfactory is the theory chiefly associated with Herbert Spencer, which traces religion back to the worship of ancestors under the guise of ghosts as its sole factor. The theory rests on the supposition that the deities worshipped by primitive man are, in reality, the spirits of his ancestors."[2] Mr. Wells is apparently unaware that the theory *is* chiefly associated with Herbert Spencer, for it is to that modern Æsop, Grant Allen, that he refers us for scientific information as to how the "Old Man" of the tribe, after his death, became a god. "Grant Allen," says Mr. Wells with evident deference, "in his *Evolution of the Idea of God*, laid stress chiefly on the posthumous worship of the 'Old Man.'" Grant Allen, as a matter of fact, simply popularized Herbert Spencer, and as long ago as 1913 a Rationalist Press Association manual, treating of the book to which Mr. Wells sends his readers, said of Grant Allen: "His examples are taken without regard to the degree of culture of the tribes, and it is

[1] P. 77. [2] *The Study of Religion*, p. 184.

generally recognized that he has emphasized only one element in the making of gods."[1] It is now generally recognized that what Grant Allen emphasized is not an element in the making of gods at all. Grant Allen set out bravely "to show how in the great Jewish god himself we may discern, as in a glass, darkly, the vague but constant lineaments of an ancestral ghost-deity."[2] Possibly Mr. Wells is unacquainted with the exquisite comedy of Huxley and Spencer searching the Scriptures for evidences of ancestor-worship. Huxley's success may be gauged by the fact that the most striking instances he cites are "the singular weight attached to the veneration of parents in the Fourth Commandment," and the Ark of the Covenant, which "may have been a relic of ancestor worship"—though how, precisely, he is at a loss to explain. So fruitless was his search that he abandoned it in disgust and took refuge in the highly original theory that the evidences of ancestor-worship in the Old Testament must have been deliberately suppressed by pietistic copyists bent on bolstering up monotheism—presumably on the principle that the end justifies the means. Spencer, having found no evidence whatever of ghost-worship amongst the Hebrews, sententiously remarks that "the silence of their legends is but a negative fact, which may be as misleading as negative facts usually are." Quite so. But nevertheless we

[1] *The Existence of God*, by Joseph McCabe, p. 24.
[2] *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 68.

may be excused for not embracing a theory whose only foundation is a negative fact—in other words, the complete absence of any evidence in support of it.

To quote Grant Allen on this subject is simply ludicrous. To-day no reputable anthropologist takes even Huxley or Spencer seriously, much less Grant Allen. It is so objectively unlikely that the idea of a deathless god should have evolved in the savage mind out of the idea of a dead ancestor that all serious anthropologists, in the lack of any evidence for it, have abandoned the theory. The Supreme Being of the savage belonged to a world that knew no death—the ghost of a dead man could never enter there. Ghosts and gods were never confused in the savage mind, however much Huxley, Spencer, and Grant Allen may have confused them. "Ghosts," says Crawford Howell Toy, "are shadowy doubles of human beings, sometimes nameless, wandering about without definite purpose except to procure food for themselves, uncertain of temper, friendly or unfriendly, according to caprice;" but "the god appears to have been at the outset a well-formed anthropomorphic being. His genesis is different from that of the ghost, spirit, ancestor, or totem."[1] The present state of expert opinion with regard to the theory advocated by Mr. Wells is thus voiced by Dr. Jevons: "The 'deified ancestor' theory, however, would have us believe that there was once a man named Zeus, who had a

[1] *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 266.

family, and his descendants thought that he was a god. . . . The fact is that ancestors known to be human were not worshipped as gods, and that ancestors worshipped as gods were not believed to have been human."[1] And, again, he says quite bluntly: "Religion did not originate from ancestor-worship, nor ancestor-worship from religion."[2] The Grant Allen theory to-day is not so much as mentioned amongst anthropologists. Thus, though Mr. E. O. James, in his recent manual of anthropology, devotes a whole chapter to "The Religion of Primeval Man," he says never a word on the theory which Mr. Wells commends to his readers with the calm assurance that it played an important part in building up "a complex something" which "we may call *religion*."[3] Mr. Wells declares that in the compilation of his *History* he has consulted many experts; but experts in the study of religion do not seem to have been amongst the number. Instead of betaking himself to Grant Allen, he might with profit have dipped into the pages of Toy, or Jevons, or Jastrow, and taken to heart the latter's warning anent theorists "with a decided prejudice against religion, which disqualifies them from judging religious phenomena calmly and dispassionately."[4]

A careful investigation of the available material for the study of the history of religion has led many

[1] *Introduction to the History of Religion*, p. 302.
[2] *Ibid.*, p. 197.
[3] P. 77.
[4] *The Study of Religion*, p. 181.

capable enquirers to conclude that the idea of God did not "evolve" at all, but was gathered, quite naturally, even by primitive man, from a consideration of the phenomena of nature around him. Surely the intelligence with which the Grant Allen school insist on endowing primitive man—an intelligence sufficient to work out a belief in a beneficent Supreme Being from ghosts of doubtful character—would have been more than sufficient to enable the savage to discern a mover behind the bolt from the blue as readily as behind the arrow in its flight.

In his chronicles of civilized man, one hardly expects from Mr. Wells the detail of a Froissart. The latter's voluminous chronicles cover barely eighty years, whereas whole millenniums are generously spanned in single parts of the *Outline*. This method of writing history has its disadvantages, since it involves looking at events through the wrong end of the telescope. It is, therefore, not surprising if Mr. Wells's ornate thumb-nail sketches occasionally bear little resemblance to the spacious scenes they purport to represent. This is a fault common to all bird's-eye views of history, but to it Mr. Wells adds a peculiar vice of his own. His history is purposive, designed to show "that men form one universal brotherhood, that they spring from one common origin, that their individual lives, their nations and races, interbreed and blend and go on to merge again at last in one common human destiny upon this little planet amidst the stars." Where the

ordinary historian is content with classification, Mr. Wells, in the light of his guiding principle, insists on unification. His is a history for democrats by a democrat. No one is allowed to appear unique in it. All great historic personages are speedily reduced to their least common denominator, and Athens, aristocrat of cities, is declared to have had "very much the atmosphere of the lower sort of contemporary music-hall." His study of religions is designed chiefly to show that the essential differences between Gautama, Confucius, Mahommed, and Christ, are really not worth writing about. Small wonder, then, if Mr. Wells applies the levelling-down process to Moses, David, and Solomon.

The story of "The Hebrew Scripture and the Prophets" is told in fourteen teeming pages, to which Mr. Wells prefixes this significant note: "*The Encyclopædia Biblica* has been of great use here." This work, on which Mr. Wells relies so confidently, is advertised to-day by Messrs. Watts and Co. as "The Work for all Rationalists," and is offered, brand new, to all and sundry, for just half the price at which it was originally published. It is chiefly valuable as exemplifying the views held by the extreme left wing of Biblical critics some twenty years ago. Yet this is the *fons et origo* of the study in the Scriptures with which Mr. Wells presents the masses. He is nothing if not versatile, and in the sixth part of his *History* he adopts quite the tone and style of the higher critic. For instance, he tells us that

" there is much about the story of Moses that has a mythical flavour, and one of the most remarkable incidents in it, his concealment by his mother in an ark of bulrushes, has also been found in an ancient Sumerian inscription made at least a thousand years before his time by that Sargon I. who founded the ancient Akkadian-Sumerian Empire."[1] Mr. Wells then gives a translation of the inscription, and rounds off the story with the comment, " This is perplexing." It is, but Mr. Wells himself has introduced the perplexity. Let us look at the known facts. The inscription quoted by Mr. Wells is not Sumerian at all. It occurs in an omen-tablet, which is admitted by all experts to be Neo-Babylonian, and therefore certainly *after* the time of Moses. Canon Driver, for instance, in his commentary on Exodus,[2] assigns it to the eighth century B.C. But that is not all. Professor Leonard W. King, Assistant Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, and Professor of Assyrian and Babylonian Archæology in the University of London, has recently discovered the chronicle from which the inscription on the omen-tablet was compiled. Writing in 1916, he says: " Finally, the recent discovery of a copy of the original chronicle, from which the historical references in the omen-tablet were taken, restored the traditions to their true setting and freed them from the augural text into which they had been

[1] P. 164. [2] P. 12.

incorporated."[1] Unfortunately for Mr. Wells, in all that is extant of this Semite (not Sumerian) chronicle there is no mention whatsoever of the vital incident stressed by him—the story of Sargon's being abandoned by his mother to the river in a basket of reeds.[2] So much for the facts. But the higher critic is frequently more concerned about theories than about facts, and gives us to understand that, though his facts may be wrong, his theories must be right. Now it is more particularly against Mr. Wells's theory and method that we wish to protest. Were the incident of Sargon's exposure exactly as set forth by Mr. Wells, it would nevertheless not be safe to conclude that the Hebrews must have borrowed from the Babylonians. It is precisely this sort of unwarranted inference that has brought the study of comparative religion, as practised by the rationalist school, into disrepute. The comparative method has its uses, but, as Professor Rhys Davids remarks, it "will be of worse than no service if we imagine that likeness is any proof of direct relationship, that similarity of ideas in different countries shows that either the one or the other was necessarily a borrower. . . . It would, of course, be going too far to deny that coincidences of belief are occasionally produced by actual contact of mind with mind; but it is no more necessary to assume that they always are so, than

[1] *A History of Sumer and Akkad*, p. 220.

[2] *Chronicles concerning Early Babylonian Kings*, by Professor L. W. King, Vol. I., pp. 27 ff.

to assume that chalk cliffs, if there be such, in China, are produced by chalk cliffs in the Downs of Sussex. They have no connection one with another, except that both are the result of similar causes. Yet this manner of reasoning is constantly found, not only through the whole range of the literature of the subject from classical times downwards, but even in the works of the present day."[1]

It is the manner of reasoning adopted by Mr. Wells, not only with regard to the historical records of the Old Testament, but, as we shall see, even with regard to Christian origins.

The psycho-analyst would say that Mr. Wells must have suffered, as a boy, from an overdose of the righteousness of David and Solomon, so vigorously does he react at the mere mention of their names. They are the real villains of this *Outline*, and Mr. Wells exercises his author's privilege of abusing them roundly. He would be more convincing were he less reckless in the things he says about them. For instance, the finishing touches he adds to the picture of David as a scheming adventurer are more artistic than accurate: "He married Michal, the daughter of Saul, but there was no love between them. The marriage was an attempt to legitimate his position. She hated and insulted him—he had

[1] *The Origin and Growth of Religion*, as illustrated by some points in the history of Indian Buddhism (pp. 3, 4). So also M. Cumont: "Resemblances do not necessarily imply imitation. Similarities of ideas or practices ought to be explained, without any reference to borrowing, by community of origin" (*Les Religions Orientales*, p. 13).

hung her sons—and kept her a close captive (2 Sam. vi.)."[1] Now the Bible says: "And Michal, Saul's daughter, loved David" (1 Sam. xviii. 20); and again, "Saul saw and knew that the Lord was with David, and that Michal, Saul's daughter, loved him" (1 Sam. xviii. 28). Moreover, according to the very chapter of the Second Book of Samuel cited by Mr. Wells, "Michal, the daughter of Saul, had no child unto the day of her death." Clearly, then, David could not have hanged her sons. It is Mr. Wells's exegesis that is at fault. He has misunderstood 2 Sam. xxi. 8, in which we read of "the five sons of Michal, the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel." Though she brought them up for Adriel, they were not her sons, but the sons of Merob, the wife of Adriel. They are called the sons of Michal because she adopted them and brought them up as her own. (See note to 2 Kings xxi. 8, in the Douay Version.) Furthermore, there is nothing whatever in the chapter cited by Mr. Wells, or in any other, as to David's keeping her a close captive. We know not to what private sources of information Mr. Wells may have had access, but statements so manifestly at variance with all historical record need some confirmation.

His estimate of the influence of the Babylonians on the Jews is thus briefly summarized: "The plain fact of the Bible narrative is that the Jews went to Babylon barbarians and came back civi-

[1] P. 169.

lized . . . they returned with most of their material for the Old Testament."[1] One can only rub one's eyes and wonder if Mr. Wells has any idea of what is generally admitted to be pre-exilic in the Old Testament. The list of such writings is a fairly formidable one. In the Hexateuch, the Jahvist and Elohist documents, the Deuteronomist, Josue, and the bulk of the legislative matter in the Pentateuch; Judges, Ruth, Jeremias, Samuel, and Kings; the Proto-Isaias, Amos, Osee, Micheas, Joel, Jonas, Nahun, and most of Sophonias; and, in addition, three-quarters of the Book of Psalms and the Book of Proverbs, to say nothing of the Canticle of Canticles. Even supposing that some or all of these were re-edited after the exile, it is surely grotesque to represent the Hebrews as returning from Babylon with the bare materials for the Old Testament. That "some of the later books are frankly post-captivity compositions"[2] hardly justifies Mr. Wells's wild flight of fancy about the rest. Nor is he any more accurate in describing the leading ideas of these books. He says: "There was the belief first of all that Jehovah was the greatest and most powerful of tribal gods, and then that he was a god above all other gods, and at last that he was the only true god."[3] Very skilfully Mr. Wells manages to convey the idea that monotheism amongst the Jews was the product of evolution. We seem to detect faint echoes of Grant Allen: "The only people who

[1] P. 173. [2] P. 173. [3] P. 173.

ever invented a pure monotheism at first hand were the Jews. . . . It is the peculiar glory of Israel to have evolved God."[1] But where in the whole range of the Old Testament is there the slightest evidence that the Jews, as a people, were ever anything but monotheists? The view that religion was at first monotheistic and degenerated into polytheism is still more widely held than any rival opinion, because, as Andrew Lang remarked, "it may be an old theory, but facts 'winna ding,' and are on the side of an old theory." Mr. Wells, with showman's gesture, represents the god of the Jews as a purely tribal or national deity, but the pre-exilic Book of Amos represents Him, not only as the God who brought Israel out of the land of Egypt, but also as the God who brought the Philistines, the mortal enemies of the Jews, out of Caphtor, and the Syrians out of Kir (Amos ix. 7). Mr. Wells might have given us an explanatory footnote with regard to this passage, for on his theory it has urgent need of elucidation. Also we would like to know how, on his evolutionary hypothesis, he explains the fact that, though the Jews were so susceptible to Babylonian influence, they reacted against the religion of their masters in general culture. Here is a race of barbarians with a tribal god, who after sojourning for some seventy years in Babylon, absorbing culture at every pore, emerge, not astral polytheists like their masters, but confirmed mono-

[1] *The Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 68.

theists. The evolution of monotheism in such circumstances seems to us a greater miracle than any that Mr. Wells rejects. Considering the psychology of the Jewish race, their intense nationalism, their marked conservatism—not to say obstinacy—even from a purely naturalistic standpoint, it is much more probable that the Jews came out of captivity pure monotheists for the exceedingly simple reason that they were pure monotheists when they entered it. This, too, is thoroughly in keeping with the portrait of the Jew given by Mr. Wells some two hundred pages farther on: "He remained obstinately monotheistic; he would have none other gods but the one true God. In Rome, as in Jerusalem, he stood out manfully against the worship of any god-Cæsar. And to the best of his ability he held to his covenants with his God. No graven images could enter Jerusalem; even the Roman standards with their eagles had to stay outside."[1] An impartial student would be led to suspect that what the Jew was in Rome and Jerusalem, he was also in Babylon, especially as his conservatism was no new trait in his character. In Exodus and Deuteronomy the Jews are described as a "stiff-necked people," and the psychologist has every reason to judge that, had they been anything but monotheistic to begin with, they would, humanly speaking, have remained so to the end.

We will now pass on to "The Beginning,

[1] P. 355.

the Rise, and the Divisions of Christianity" (Part XII.), since Mr. Wells himself links up this part of his *Outline* with the history of the Hebrews.[1] Here we must confess to a feeling of disappointment that a man of Mr. Wells's undoubted ability should rest content with the tattered theory of the Pauline origin of Christianity: Paul gave to the "Nazarenes" the beginnings of a creed; the "Nazarene" himself was "the seed rather than the founder of Christianity."[2] We had all this *ad nauseam* a quarter of a century ago. Mr. Wells has evidently not kept pace with the rationalist movement. Nowadays, the fact that Christ was a teacher with a definite creed to which He called upon all to subscribe is made the basis of a charge of intolerance against the "Nazarene." The mere fact that the commonest expression on the lips of Christ is "Amen, amen, I say unto you"—an expression occurring some seventy times in the Gospels—is in itself sufficient to dispose of the idea that Christ did not regard Himself as a teacher and a founder. Mr. Wells seems to think that the religion of Christ is comprised in the Eight Beatitudes. He has forgotten that it was the same Christ who said, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven"; "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you"; and "If he will not hear the church, let him be

[1] P. 353. [2] P. 355.

to thee as the heathen and the publican." This fanciful theory of the Pauline origin of Christianity falls to pieces before the robust common sense of Mr. G. K. Chesterton, who says of Mr. Wells: "Thus he seems almost to revive the suggestion of Renan: that St. Paul founded the Church that was really obeyed too much, while Christ only imagined the religion that was never obeyed enough. This is the sort of thing that is consistent with everything except the facts. It might be the relation between a prophet and an apostle; but it was certainly not the relation between that prophet and that apostle. I could understand a man saying that the Paul of the Epistles was a bumptious, bad-tempered, and meddlesome bishop, wanting too much to boss everything or speed up everything. But the same realistic approach will make it perfectly plain that he is certainly not a person professing to *found* anything. He has not the tone of a lawgiver even like Mahomet or Moses, far less like Christ. He first persecuted the Church of God; but there was a Church for him to persecute. Possibly he afterwards pestered the Church of God; but there was a Church for him to pester. He had not made it, and never for one instant did he really talk as if he had. On the other hand, I can understand a man, an atheist or any anti-religionist, saying that Christ was a myth, or was a maniac, or was a liar and deceiver of the people. But I cannot understand any man arguing from the Gospel accounts and denying

that Christ *did* talk as if he was founding something. He did talk like a lawgiver, like an origin; not like a man belonging to something, but one making something for other people to belong to. We may belong to it or not, we may believe a word of it or not, we may like it or tolerate it or not, but that is the critical fact about the records as they stand; he most certainly did, according to those records, speak as one having authority and not as the scribes."[1]

It is Mr. Wells's desire for unification that leads him to adopt such a theory. He is determined to demonstrate that there is nothing unique about Christianity, and no theory is too absurd if it will only reduce Christ to the level of the founders of other "universal religions." Every bead must be made to fit the string on which Mr. Wells has determined to thread it.

One imagines that Dr. Bosanquet and Mr. Joseph would not be so anxious to banish the syllogism from our midst after a course of Mr. Wells's non-syllogistic reasoning. It allows of an easy and graceful transition from the possible to the actual order. "It may be that the early parts of the Gospels are accretions," he tells us. He has decided weakness for maybes, which are generally presented with such a wealth of detail that the average reader comes to regard them as facts.[2] But, as a distinguished rationalist has

[1] *The New Witness*, July 16, p. 209.

[2] Mr. Belloc has cleverly emphasized this characteristic in the *Dublin Review*, April-May-June, "A Few Words with Mr. Wells."

pointed out, " anything which does not involve a positive contradiction in terms *may be. But maybes are not honey bees!*" Also Mr. Wells needs reminding that things are not always what they seem. During the first two centuries of the Christian era, he says, " a considerable amount of a sort of theocrasia seems to have gone on between the Christian cult and the almost equally popular and widely diffused Mithraic cult and the cult of Serapis-Isis-Horus."[1] This seems so to Mr. Wells because of a few superficial similarities in the three cults. As we have pointed out, he is apparently quite convinced that similarity of any kind in religious rites is a proof of common origin. A wider acquaintance with the history of religions would make him a little chary of that principle. The vestiges of Mithraism which he discerns in Christianity are faint indeed. The substitution of Sunday for the Jewish Sabbath is one. It apparently has not occurred to Mr. Wells that this change was made by the Christians in honour of Christ's Resurrection, which took place on the first day of the week. Mithraic are " probably also those ideas and phrases so distinctive of certain sects to this day, about being ' washed in the blood ' of Christ, and of Christ being a blood sacrifice. For we have to remember that a death by crucifixion is hardly a more bloody death than hanging: to speak of Jesus shedding His Blood for mankind is really a most inaccurate expression."[2] Death

[1] P. 368. [2] P. 368.

by crucifixion, in the ordinary way, may not have been bloody, but Christ's death certainly was. One would imagine that Mr. Wells had never heard of the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, and the piercing of Christ's side with a lance. And what sense is there in looking to Mithraism for the origin of a phraseology which is manifestly a modification of that of the Old Testament? M. Cumont, the greatest authority on the Taurobolium, long ago rejected the theory of which Mr. Wells now gives us a *réchauffé*, and showed that, so far from Christianity having adopted the ideas and phraseology of Mithraism, it was the other way about: "On the contrary, from the time when Christianity became a moral power in the world, it imposed itself even on its enemies. The Phrygian priests of the Great Mother opposed their feasts of the spring equinox to the Christian Easter, and attributed to the blood spilt in the Taurobolium the redeeming power of the Blood of the Lamb."[1] According to the same authority, pagan mysteries were deliberately approximated to Christian rites. It was claimed for the Mithraic baptism of blood that it was more efficacious than the Christian baptism of water, and the Mother of the gods was likened to the Mother of God.[2] Mr. Wells lays some emphasis on what he considers to be contributions of the Alexandrine cult to Christian thought and practice: "In the personality of Horus,

[1] *Religions Orientales*, p. 11.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 86. See also his *Mystères de Mithra*, I., p. 341.

who was at once the son of Serapis and identical with Serapis, it was natural for the Christians to find an illuminating analogue in their struggles with the Pauline mysteries. From that to the identification of Mary with Isis, and her elevation to a rank quasi-divine . . . was also a very natural step."[1]

Now Isis herself has been identified with Minerva, Venus, Diana, Proserpina, Ceres, Juno, Bellona, Hecate, and Rhamnasia.[2] Where is all this identification going to end? Mr. Wells gives the reader to understand that it was the early Christians who identified Mary with Isis, whereas the "identification" is in reality sheer speculation on the part of modern theorists. From Apuleius we know how the highest attributes of every known deity were predicated of Isis, so that it is no difficult matter to find points of resemblance between her and the Queen of Heaven. The differences between the two—though far more striking and far more significant in view of the syncretism that went on in the cult of Isis—are calmly ignored by the upholders of identity. Isis, like Osiris, was originally a beast, and therefore retains the heifer's horns as a symbol of her primitive nature; she was wife to her own brother; her priests were healers, wizards, and exorcists; all manner of excesses were connected with her worship, and yet we are asked to believe that the early Christians confused her with the Mother of Jesus. There is hardly a

[1] P. 368. [2] *The Golden Ass*, xi., c. 5.

pagan goddess with whom Mary has not been at one time or another "identified," and in selecting Isis Mr. Wells is somewhat out of date. If he wants to keep abreast of "modern thought," he must identify Mary with Virgo of the Zodiac!

The *reductio ad absurdum* of this kind of thing has been reached by an advanced scholar[1] who "appeals, in support of his contention, to the representation on the side-door of Notre Dame in Paris, where (he says) Virgo is omitted among the signs of the Zodiac because she is identified with Mary!"[2] The analogue alluded to by Mr. Wells is very far from "illuminating." Salomon Reinach speaks of the "inextricable confusion" of Egyptian mythology,[3] and adds: "Hieroglyphic inscriptions and papyri reveal the details of the ritual, more especially that of the dead; but the myths of the gods elude us for the most part, and the only one familiar to us, that of Osiris, was preserved by a Greek author."[4] It is in this elusive mythology that Mr. Wells seeks for Christian origins. As for Serapis, he was a Græco-Asiatic deity, analogous to Pluto and identified with Osiris, who was introduced by the Ptolemies to Alexandria at the beginning of the Hellenic domination. In what sense his son Horus was "identical with Serapis" Mr. Wells unfortunately does not explain, and we are at a loss to discover.

[1] Jeremias in his *Babylonisches*, p. 35.

[2] *Primitive Christianity and its Non-Jewish Sources*, by Professor Carl Clemen, translated by Robert E. Nisbet, p. 304.

[3] *Orpheus*, p. 27.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

He has, in fact, merely revived the comparative method of Pfleiderer, which is thus commented on in the *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*: "The comparisons which Pfleiderer so industriously makes exaggerate the resemblances and ignore the differences between Christian ideas and the myths and legends of other religions, besides making the curious assumption, that if any similarity, however remote, can be suggested between a myth or legend and what claims to be a fact of Christian history, the fact cannot be a fact, but must be a fiction."[1] It will be found, on investigation, that the parallels cited by Mr. Wells are of the vaguest description. Far closer parallels are not regarded as indicating the kind of religious exchange which Mr. Wells seems to think must have taken place. To take an instance: "The Greeks," says Reinach, "were struck by the similarity of the legend of Osiris and that of Dionysos Zagreus, the young bull devoured by the Titans, to which Zeus granted a new and glorious life. These legends, both based upon sacrificial rites, coincide without having presumably borrowed one from another."[2] The kind of thing that passed muster when Pfleiderer wrote his *Early Christian Concept of Christ* will not pass muster now—there must be at least some evidence of the *borrowing*. For the theory of loan-gods, once so popular with anthropologists, is pretty generally recognized as being beset with many pitfalls for the unwary.

[1] Vol. III., p. 582, col. 2. [2] *Orpheus*, p. 31.

Yet Mr. Wells must find origins somewhere other than in the Gospels, which he thus rules out of court: "Now it is a matter of fact that in the Gospels all that body of theological assertion which constitutes Christianity finds little support."[1] It seems to us that this is rather a matter of prejudice, and is the cause of Mr. Wells's excursions from the field of fact into the more congenial realm of myth. One becomes a little doubtful of Mr. Wells's matters of fact when we find him calmly recording that "the Sabellians taught practically that there were three equal Gods, God the Father, God the Son (with whom Jesus was identified), and God the Holy Ghost."[2] This is a little hard on the Sabellians, seeing that they went astray with regard to the Persons of the Trinity through over-emphasizing the unity of God, and protested vigorously against the current Platonic speculation about the Trinity lest it should foster the notion that there was a plurality of Gods.[3] Mr. Wells's account of the Sabellians is hardly calculated to inspire confidence in his handling of matters theological.

Nor is he any more at home in the history of philosophy. Writing of the mediæval period, he says: "It may not surprise the reader to learn that the philosophy of the Catholic Church was essentially a Realist philosophy."[4] This, however, surprises not only the reader, but also Mr. Ernest

[1] P. 358. [2] P. 370.

[3] "Ne videantur deos dicere": Origen, "On Titus," Frag. II. [4] P. 510.

Barker, who appends this footnote to Mr. Wells's text: " Nor is it true that Realism was the philosophy of the Church. It was, in the early Middle Ages; but, after Occam (1330), Nominalism triumphed and was the philosophy of the Church till the Reformation. Luther denounced Nominalism."[1] The plain fact of the matter is that the " Church " never had a " philosophy " as such. Followers of Occam did not constitute the Church, and the most celebrated of them, Buridan, was prohibited from teaching and condemned. With equal justice, the views of opponents of Occam, such as Thomas of Strasbourg and Raymond of Sabunde, might be described as the philosophy of the Church. In any case, Occam's Nominalism was not as Mr. Wells conceives it, but the niceties of the matter perhaps do not appeal to him. Occam, however, is best described as " a conceptualist who uses the language of Nominalism "—a Terminist who held that the term, as it exists *mentally* (not in speech or in writing), is alone universal. Mr. Wells's account of Nominalism is somewhat rough and ready, but his account of Realism is misleading. Thus, " the Realist outdid the vulgar tendency to exaggerate the significance of class."[2] " Class " is a word which conveys a totally false impression when used in connection with Scholasticism. It connotes a definitely positivist outlook which, however familiar to Mr. Wells, was not that of the Realists. The Scholastics held species to be

[1] P. 510. [2] P. 509.

"natural," not a congeries of phenomena by the similarity of which "class" is formed. The point is important, and Mr. Wells is entirely unaware of it, with the result that his home-made illustrations of the Scholastic Realist doctrine are little better than literary libels. A word of protest against this sort of thing seems called for when Mr. Wells gives his readers to understand that his absurd caricature represents what was, at any time, the philosophy of the Catholic Church. Though Mr. Wells protests against the modern fashion of decrying the philosophical discussion of the mediæval "schoolmen" as tedious and futile, he adds: "It had to assume a severely technical form because the dignitaries of the Church, ignorant and intolerant, were on the watch for heresy."[1] Unfortunately for this ingenious theory, the said "technical form" existed before there were any dignitaries of the Church—it owes its origin to Aristotle, and was adopted in the schools because of its excellence as a didactic method. Leibnitz presumably was not engaged in a heresy-hunt when he wrote to Wagner:

"I am persuaded that if we acted oftener so, if we sent one another syllogisms and prosyllogisms with the replies in form, we could very often, in the most important scientific questions, get at the bottom of things, and dispel a great many imaginations and dreams. By the very nature of the procedure we should cut short

[1] P. 508.

repetitions, exaggerations, digressions, incomplete expositions, voluntary or involuntary omissions, mistakes of order, misunderstandings, and all the annoying results that follow from these things."[1]

It is just possible that the "schoolmen" thought so too. However, an account of the "schoolmen," in which there is one passing allusion to St. Thomas Aquinas, need not be taken too seriously.

Mr. Wells is not a sympathetic chronicler of the Crusades. To him, as a Humanitarian, they are merely foolish expeditions resulting in great loss of human life, interesting only in so far as the "will to crusade" may be regarded as the germ of the "will to power." For him they are merely an illustration of how out of evil cometh good. Contrary to the intention of those who promoted them, the Crusades helped to democratize Europe, since, according to Mr. Wells, the crusaders naturally returned from the East with a lessened regard for Papal authority, and are therefore to be hailed as heralds of revolt. It is perhaps too much to expect a man of Mr. Wells's temperament to show any real understanding of the chivalrous spirit of the crusaders, but one would have thought that a man of his vision would have seen in these much abused Crusades prime factors in the advancement of civilization. Guizot long ago pointed out how much Europe owed to the Greek and Saracenic civilizations, with which

[1] Quoted by Cardinal Mercier in his *Logique*, p. 171.

the crusaders were brought into contact. The mere linking-up of East and West, and the intercommunication in literature, art, and commerce, brought about by the Crusades, ought to be sufficient pragmatic justification even for Mr. Wells. How enthusiastically he would have written of the beneficent effects of these same Crusades had they not been under the ægis of the Church of Rome! In one of his novels he makes his hero speak of the priests of the Catholic Church as men with faces averted from the dawn and feet set backwards. Mr. Wells believes this. It is a cardinal article of his creed, and much of his history is understandable only as a subscription to it. In this *Outline* the Catholic Church is always the clog on the wheel of progress. Thus: "Men of faith and wisdom believe in growth and their fellow-men; but priests, even such priests as Gregory VII., believe in the false 'efficiency' of an imposed discipline."[1] An historian who can write thus of the Hildebrand whom Dean Milman bids us regard with awe as a benefactor of mankind has indeed let his prejudice against priests run away with him. But it is perhaps only what might be expected from one who is convinced that "Rome has always had too much of the shrewdness of the priest and too little of the power of the prophet."[2] As Mr. Wells assures us that every chapter of his *History* has been submitted to an expert, we cannot help wondering who was the expert who passed the following:

[1] P. 462. [2] P. 461.

"The Pope might in many instances set aside the laws of the Church in individual cases; he might allow cousins to marry, permit a man to have two wives, or release anyone from a vow."[1] Mr. Wells apparently belongs to the same school of thought as the boy who declared that during an interdict the Pope forbids all births, deaths, and marriages for a year. Some expert might have explained to Mr. Wells that there are laws and laws, and that even the Pope cannot dispense from the natural, or from the divine positive, law. Possibly Mr. Wells has in mind some case in which a man, after his marriage has been declared null *ab initio*, has contracted a valid marriage whilst his first "wife" was alive. Such cases are contemplated in every modern code of civil law, and the charge of permitting polygamy, which Mr. Wells brings against the Church, might just as reasonably be levelled at the British Constitution.

By the time his chronicles reach the thirteenth century, Mr. Wells is already surveying the ruins of the Church of Rome: "It now behoves us to attempt a diagnosis of the failure of the Roman Church to secure and organize the good will of mankind."[2] That supposed failure he attributes to the fact that the Church "had become dogmatic." Such passages as the following about Popes and Cardinals are not in the best possible taste: "And it was just because many of them probably doubted secretly of the entire soundness

[1] P. 462. [2] P. 464.

of their vast and elaborate doctrinal fabric that they would brook no discussion of it. They were intolerant of questions or dissent; not because they were sure of their faith, but because they were not."[1] Such imputations of bad faith are more easily made than substantiated, and befit the mud-slinging controversialist rather than the impartial historian. Because we respect his honesty of purpose we regret that Mr. Wells has soiled his hands with such weapons. That he is doing his best to be fair to the historic Church we have no doubt. But fair he cannot be—he is psychologically unfitted for the task of Church historian. His disqualification lies precisely in the fact that he is himself a religious reformer, zealously propagating a new evangel. With much suffering of soul he has risen from arid agnosticism to a shadowy theism, and found a faith—a faith in a "younger god," struggling and groping to find himself. In the service of that god Mr. Wells has become the Prophet of Progress, preaching that nothing is, was, or ever can be final. Like Nietzsche, he has set out to blaze a new path—into the future and backwards across the ages. Under the spell of his message, facts are moulded to fit theory, and his history becomes little better than a novel with a purpose—a thrilling story designed to show that the new faith is higher and nobler than the old.

In view of the many partisan Protestant accounts of the "Glorious Reformation," which

[1] P. 465.

for centuries have passed as history, we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Wells for having made a stand, in a popular work, against what the *Cambridge Modern History* calls "the long conspiracy against the revelation of truth." He may be, and oftentimes is, mistaken in his notions about the Reformation, but he does not degrade his graceful pen by bolstering up "reformed Churches." He is under no delusions as to their origins, and obviously for him it is the historic Church or none at all.

He discerns the germ of the Reformation in the early Middle Ages, when, in his opinion, the Catholic Church foolishly antagonized "the Nordic barbarians" of the North and West by introducing what he regards as distinctively Oriental institutions—monasticism and sacerdotal celibacy. A sufficient answer to this somewhat grotesque theory is contained in a footnote to the text, by Mr. Ernest Barker, who says:

"I do not think this is just. The Anglo-Saxons were not antimonastic. They were converted by Benedictine monks in 600; just after 700 they sent out monks to convert Germany; about 960, under Dunstan and Edgar, they experienced a monastic revival. The Normans, after 1066, introduced the Cluniac and Cistercian Orders, and spread monasticism, while the earlier Northmen, after 900, were quite favourable to the Church in England. Note that Gregory's imposition of celibacy on the clergy *was* accepted, and willingly accepted, by the contemporary

lay-world. William the Conqueror, through Bishop Lanfranc, enforced celibacy in England."[1]

Despite this footnote, and in the face of all historical evidence, Mr. Wells persists in asserting that in the West celibate priests "were regarded with the profoundest scepticism and suspicion." In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries he professes to find "an intellectual attack upon the priest as priest, and upon the ceremony of the Mass,"[2] without, however, indicating anything particularly intellectual in the noisy brawlings of the Lollards and Hussites. After that, he comes to the Reformation proper, of which he writes:

"The series of ensuing changes, those changes that are known collectively in history as the Reformation, took on a threefold aspect. There was the Reformation according to the princes, who wanted to stop the flow of money to Rome and to seize the moral authority, the educational power, and the material possessions of the Church within their dominions. There was the Reformation according to the people, who sought to make Christianity a power against unrighteousness, and particularly against the unrighteousness of the rich and powerful. And, finally, there was the Reformation within the Church, of which St. Francis of Assisi was the precursor, which sought to restore the goodness of the Church and, through its goodness, to restore its power."[3]

In the princely Reformation, wherein so many Protestant historians have professed to trace the

[1] P. 497. [2] P. 497. [3] P. 504.

Hand of God, Mr. Wells, with truer insight, discerns the clutching grasp of the statesman:

"As England, Scotland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, North Germany, and Bohemia broke away from the Roman Communion, the princes and other ministers showed the utmost solicitude to keep the movement well under control. Just as much reformation as would sever the link with Rome they permitted; anything beyond that, any dangerous break towards the primitive teachings of Jesus or the crude direct interpretation of the Bible, they resisted. The Established Church of England is one of the most typical and successful of the resulting compromises. It is still sacramental and sacerdotal; but its organization centres in the Court and the Lord Chancellor, and though subversive views may, and do, break out in the lower and less prosperous ranks of its priesthood, it is impossible for them to struggle up to any position of influence and authority."[1]

Of the Reformation within the Church Mr. Wells writes with sympathy and insight, pointing out that this movement, which had its beginnings with the appearance of the Black and Grey Friars as far back as the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, received a new and powerful impetus when most needed, in the sixteenth century, from the foundation of the Society of Jesus. To the Jesuit Fathers, Mr. Wells, as a Humanitarian, pays the highest possible compliment:

[1] P. 504.

"They raised the level of intelligence, they quickened the conscience of all Catholic Europe, they stimulated Protestant Europe to competitive educational efforts. . . . Some day, it may be, we shall see a new Order of Jesuits, vowed not to the service of the Pope, but to the service of mankind."[1]

Some day, let us hope, Mr. Wells may realize that these two services are not incompatible, but merge in the service of the Invisible King.

So far, we are in substantial agreement with Mr. Wells's account of the religious movements of the sixteenth century. But we are moved to ask, *was* there, outside the Church, a Reformation according to the people, which was "essentially religious"? Here we think that Mr. Wells has lost sight of that economic interpretation of history upon which he elsewhere lays so much stress. It is curious that he does not pause to ask himself what must have been the effect on the common people of that princely Reformation which he appraises so accurately. Its immediate effect was to accelerate the coming economic revolution. Already, in the fifteenth century, a growing commerce had given rise to "business methods" which clashed with the ethical teaching of the Church. The dawn of commerce was the end of the "Golden Age of Labour." That age, as a Socialist writer has pointed out, "had been mainly agricultural, when the need for wealth

[1] P. 507.

did not exist, nor the means of preserving it when amassed, nor any method of investing it. At such a stage it was easy to enforce the unworldly commands to hoard not, to lend not at interest, to exploit not, and to inculcate charity and brotherhood, with others of what are now called counsels of perfection. With the growth of manufactures and commerce there came a conflict between the interests of trade and these teachings. The culmination of this struggle is known as the Reformation, the most misleading name ever applied to any movement. It was in no sense a reform, it was a revolt against certain objective Scriptural teachings of the Church to which obedience was only possible for human nature, when the power to exploit another was strictly limited; and its issue was the overthrow of a Church whose morality had become alien to the spirit of the age."[1]

Prior to the Reformation, everywhere in Europe the law of the land was the Canon Law of the Church—a law based on Christian principles. In the princely Reformation that law was abolished in the interests of the governing and possessing classes, who promptly enacted new laws framed for the ignoble purpose of enabling commercialism to obtain labour at its own price. Thus, in this country, in 1536, almsgiving was made a legal offence punishable by a fine of ten times the amount bestowed. Davidson, in his *Annals of Toil*, has shown how, during the Reformation

[1] *A Socialist's View of the Reformation*, by T. D. Benson, p. 4.

period, wages sunk to starvation-level. The common people were ground down body and soul. The industrial revolution, which began in the fifteenth century, affected not merely man's social life, but, even more radically, his religious life. Add to these altered conditions the fact that three successive visitations of the Black Death had left the people on the eve of the Reformation with few priests to attend to their souls (Mr. Wells himself reminds us that the plague swept away one-half of the priests of Yorkshire), and we readily understand how the wretched conditions of the daily lives of the people must have moulded their religious outlook. Mr. Benson, looking at this period through Labour's eyes, says:

"The plea that the licentiousness of the clergy and monks caused the Reformation cannot be sustained, for there was but a sectional improvement in morals resulting from it, due to the influence of the Puritan movement. This movement, like all ascetic religious movements, arose from the industrial conditions of the people. The hours of labour had been doubled, the rate of wages was barely one quarter, and the sad, forlorn condition of the people produced a life of gloom and hardship which decided their religious views and rendered their theology as austere, ascetic, and unjoyous as their own lives. . . . In lives where nothing but toil and starvation exist, a sympathetic, beneficent Deity finds no place, and bigotry, intolerance, and super-

stition are the natural results of labour without rest and of starvation without hope."[1]

In dealing with a later period of history, Mr. Wells himself shows how changes in the methods of industry affect the whole structure of society. It is strange that he does not see this principle already at work in the sixteenth century. To describe the Reformation according to the people as "essentially religious" is surely to close one's eyes to one of the most vital factors in the whole Reformation movement—the economic factor. If, as Lecky says, "inventions that are purely mechanical ultimately influence profoundly both opinions and morals," the historian can hardly fail to recognize in the industrial revolution of the sixteenth century one of the prime causes of the religious changes of the period.

In striking contrast with his character-sketches of St. Francis of Assisi and St. Ignatius Loyola is Mr. Wells's treatment of Luther. He barely mentions him, and then only to chronicle that he set up the Bible as a counter-authority to the Church, "a strategic rather than an abiding position," as the modern drift of Nonconformity has shown. One suspects that Mr. Wells endorses Matthew Arnold's estimate of Luther: "a Philistine; but a Philistine of genius." It is passing strange that Mr. Wells, with his passion for education, has nothing to say of the educational havoc wrought by the Reformers. He cannot be unaware of the classical groan of Erasmus, "*Ubicun-*

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

que regnat Lutheranismus, ibi est litterarum interitus" (Wherever Lutheranism reigns, there letters die). Education is to Mr. Wells the greatest of all shibboleths. He has written a novel to show that our University system is all wrong, and that our private and public schools are no better. He returns to the charge in his *Outline*. Gladstone, notwithstanding his "double first" at Oxford, is written down an ignorant man, "with no knowledge of ethnology, no vision of history as a whole, misconceiving the record of geology, ignorant of the elementary ideas of biological science, of modern political, social, and economic science, and modern thought and literature!"[1]

And, "the education of Mr. Gladstone was typical of that ruling-class education which has dominated British and European affairs, so far as they have been dominated by ideas, up to the present time."[2]

Now Mr. Wells himself acknowledges that that University system is a product of the Reformation: "We have told how in England the Universities after the Reformation ceased to have a wide popular appeal, how they became the educational preserve of the nobility and the gentry, and the strongholds of the Established Church."[3] And yet, in another of his fortnightly parts, in the same paragraph in which he admits that "the Catholic Church, through its propagandas, its popular appeals, its schools and Universities, opened up

[1] P. 663. [2] P. 664. [3] P. 641.

the prospect of the modern educational state in Europe," he says of this Church: "Its conception of education was not release, not an invitation to participate, but the subjugation of minds."[1] Somewhere in his *History* Mr. Wells expresses the view that every man is a partisan—and certainly he himself is. He cannot well deny that the Catholic Church founded the Universities, which were the cradle of all modern learning, but he would have us believe that in founding them she was under the impression that she was turning out, not a cradle, but a compress—something that would hinder and hamper all natural growth and expansion. The kind of people who advocate the abolition of formal logic are fond of telling us that the function of education is "to draw out, not to cram in." There is an obvious fallacy lurking here. Before we can draw out, we must put something in. The mind must be subjugated to something—preferably to knowledge, and this is the only subjugation to which minds were treated in the mediæval Universities. Cramming is acknowledged to be a modern "educational" vice, which came in with Examinations, Certificates, Diplomas, Preceptors, Inspectors, *et hoc genus omne*. "At Oxford and Cambridge," says Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch, in his recent book *On the Art of Reading*, "we find in their early days no trace of any examination at all."[2] They were, in fact, in their Catholic days, just such seats of

[1] P. 496. [2] P. 32.

learning as Mr. Wells desires—except for the fact that they were " tainted " with dogmatic religion. That is where Mr. Wells falls foul of them. It is the supposed subjugation of minds to dogmatic religion to which he really objects, though why subjugation to the principles of religion should be more inimical (or inimical at all, for that matter) to sound education than subjugation to the principles of " science," he would perhaps find it difficult to explain. It is quite useless to point out to Mr. Wells that there is not, and cannot be, any conflict between science and religion. His quarrel with dogmatic religion is that it is based on a *final* revelation, and his basic theory of universal progression will not permit him even to enquire if perchance this final revelation be a fact. It is surely better that minds should be subjugated to solid facts than to fanciful theories.

Mr. Wells's prejudice against dogmatic religion is partly due to the fact that he lays at its door all the absurdities that have ever been perpetrated in its name by misguided fanatics throughout the ages, and, of course, all the literary and scientific lapses of ecclesiastics of every and any shade of belief. The doctrine of " special creation," he complains, stood in the way of the acceptance of Darwinism, and Bishop Wilberforce, in the interests of orthodoxy, assailed Huxley on Biblical grounds. Now the theory of " special creation," to which Mr. Wells takes exception, is assuredly no dogma of the Catholic Church. It is, as

Huxley showed at the time of the controversy, a distinctively Protestant doctrine, which owed its prominence in post-Reformation theology to the vogue of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, in which creation is thus crudely depicted:

> The sixth, and of creation last, arose
> With evening harps and matin; when God said,
> Let the earth bring forth soul living in her kind,
> Cattle and creeping things, and beast of the earth,
> Each in their kind. The earth obeyed and straight
> Opening her fertile womb teem'd at a birth
> Innumerous living creatures, perfect forms,
> Limb'd and full grown. . . .
>
> * * * * *
>
> The grassy clods now calved; now half appear'd
> The tawny lion, pawing to get free
> His hinder parts, then springs as broke from bonds,
> And rampant shakes his brindled mane; the ounce,
> The libbard, and the tiger, as the mole
> Rising, the crumbled earth above them threw
> In hillocks: the swift stag from under ground
> Bore up his branching head.
>
> (*Paradise Lost*, Book VII., line 400).

A conception of this kind is opposed to any theory of evolution, but no such theory was held by the great pre-Reformation scholars. St. Augustine formulated a theistic theory of evolution based on the Mosaic cosmogony.[1] St. Thomas thought abiogenesis not incompatible with a theistic interpretation of the universe, since God might have given to matter the power of evolving life.[2] "For centuries after the time of St.

[1] *De Genesi ad literam*, lib. V., cap. v. and xxiii.
[2] *Summa Theol.*, I. lxix. 2.

Thomas, the theory of spontaneous generation was universally held and taught in all the schools of Europe," says Professor Zahn.[1] It was abandoned only after the experiments of Redi (1668) had demonstrated that the apparent production of life from non-life was due to the action of living germs. The history of the mediæval controversy with regard to abiogenesis is in itself sufficient to convince any honest enquirer that the Catholic Church did not put barriers in the way of scientific progress. The oft-cited case of Galileo is, as Cardinal Newman says, "the exception which proves the rule." It is, of course, enlarged upon by Mr. Wells, who describes how Galileo "knelt before ten cardinals in scarlet, an assembly august enough to overawe truth itself, while he amended the creation he had disarranged. The story has it that, as he rose from his knees, after repeating his recantation, he muttered, '*Eppur si muove*'—'It moves nevertheless.'"[2] Of this picturesque story there is no trace whatever before 1761—more than a century after Galileo's death. Though a manifest fabrication, it is one of those little artistic touches which not infrequently distract Mr. Wells's attention from the dull business of narrating facts. It would have been more to the point had he endeavoured to give his readers a correct idea of the mental atmosphere of Galileo's day. From Mr. Wells's account of the matter no one

[1] *Evolution and Dogma*, p. 45.
[2] P. 513.

would suspect that Galileo's contemporary, Lord Bacon, "the Father of Modern Science," violently opposed the Copernican system. And with him in opposition was Descartes, "the Father of Modern Philosophy"! "In the middle of the seventeenth century and long afterwards," says Hallam, "there were still mathematicians of no small repute who struggled staunchly for the immovability of the earth." In the face of these facts, is it fair to represent the Church as "struggling gallantly against the light"?[1] The whole question was then a very open one, as Huxley recognized when he wrote to Mivart (November 12, 1885): "I gave some attention to the case of Galileo when I was in Italy, and I arrived at the conclusion that the Pope and the College of Cardinals had rather the best of it."

Mr. Wells has always been a keen student of social science, and his diagnosis of the evils that afflict us is penetrating and accurate. We are therefore the more astonished to find him expressing the opinion that Marx, as a prophet, "is being more and more justified by events."[2] We have social ills enough, but they are not the ills which, according to Marx, the historic necessities should have inflicted on us long ere this. Thus, Marx prophesied that the trend of industrial conditions would make the lot of the working man worse and worse. It is impossible to deny that to-day there are more working men with a comfortable income than ever before. Wealth,

[1] P. 513 [2] P. 647.

he maintained, would gradually be concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

"It is sometimes argued against Marx," says Mr. Wells, "that the proportion of people who have savings invested has increased in many modern communities. These savings are, technically, 'capital,' and their owners 'capitalists' to that extent, and this is supposed to contradict the statement of Marx that property concentrates into few and fewer hands. Marx used many of his terms carelessly and chose them ill, and his ideas were better than his words. When he wrote 'property' he meant 'property so far as it is power.' The small investor has remarkably little power over his invested capital."[1]

True, but he has some capital and some power over it, and there are far more, and not far fewer, people with capital and power than when Marx wrote.[2] It has been well said that the history of Socialism is a history of false prophecy. These prophets went astray because they neglected one vital factor in the social situation—the psychological factor. Paradoxical as it may sound, these champions of Humanity forgot that the proper study of man is mankind. Marx was chiefly concerned with the deification of a mechanical system, and those upon whom his mantle des-

[1] P. 647.

[2] It may be argued that Marx is justified in the menace of the Trust; but against this must be set the portent of the Co-operative Movement. See *Christian Socialism* (1920), by Charles E. Raven, chaps. viii.-x.

cended studied everything and anything except the nature of man himself. That human nature is the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, is a truth which Mr. Wells himself overlooks. He sees no remedy for our present discontents until, many decades hence, we are in a position to set up "a scientifically conceived political system." He assures us that we can no more do that now than our fathers in 1820 could have set up an electric power-station. Why? Because "our science of human relationships is still so crude and speculative as to leave us without definite guidance upon a score of primarily important issues."[1] It does not occur to Mr. Wells that possibly man knows as much about the principles which govern, or ought to govern, human relationships as he is ever likely to know. Such is his faith in progress that he confidently looks to the future to evolve new ethical principles. He might as well expect mathematicians to evolve new numerals. As every problem of arithmetic is worked out by correct manipulation of the figures from one to ten, so, too, every problem affecting the soul of man is soluble by means of definite, unchangeable Christian principles. To plead for more figures, or new figures, to work out a sum would be to plead for an absurdity. If we cannot work the sum, the fault is not in the figures, but in our ignorance of their application. And, if we cannot see our way clear through the problems of the day, the fault is not in the prin-

[1] P. 654.

ciples of Christianity, but in our not applying, or misapplying, them. The remedy is not in "progress," but in reversion to the principles of Christ.

In these pages we are concerned with Mr. Wells's *History* only in so far as it touches directly on religious issues. His record of purely secular affairs lies beyond our scope, and we cannot, for instance, enter into a consideration of his fascinating presentment of the cause and course of the Great War. Suffice it to say that he regards the war as "a necessary consequence of the mentality of the period." The world of 1913, in the retrospect, is seen to be "a world of lost and faded beliefs," and the war "a necessary fulfilment of such an age of drift."[1] The present is an age of disillusionment. England has not become a land fit for heroes. The time is out of joint, and as yet we discern no one born to set it right. On every side there is a reaching out, a groping after a vague something which will restore to the world its lost stability. "We call this stir towards a new order, this refusal to drift on in the old directions, unrest," says Mr. Wells, "but rather is it hope which disturbs the world"[2] —a vague hope of better things, a hope which Mr. Wells warns us will be dashed to the ground, unless religion become once again the leaven of society. There has been, in Mr. Wells's phrase, "a *de-civilization* of men's minds" through the divorce of religious teaching from organized edu-

[1] P. 748. [2] P. 749.

cation; but, if the race is to be saved, "presently education must become again in intention and spirit religious."[1] Mr. Wells is not eating his words. He is at pains to explain that by religion he does not mean "the old too elaborate religious formulæ" which he throws on the scrap-heap of history, but "a common world-religion, very much simplified and universalized and better understood"—a religion which is not Christianity, nor Islam, nor Buddhism, nor any specialized form, but "religion itself pure and undefiled; the Eightfold Way, the Kingdom of Heaven, brotherhood, creative service, and self-forgetfulness."[2] This elemental religion is to bring about a Humanitarian Utopia, in which there will be no mad-houses, no custom-house officials, no large police forces or gaol staffs; no cheats, sharpers, gamblers, forestallers, parasites, or speculators, but in which, nevertheless, there will be no diminution of adventure or romance.[3] We are somewhat dazed by this vision of the "unification of the world," and close the chapter feeling that

> His talk was like a spring which runs
> With rapid change from rocks to roses;
> It slipped from politics to puns,
> It passed from Mahomet to Moses.

And, after all, what is this panacea advocated by Mr. Wells? Nothing more or less than a return to the "Ethical Religion" of the early

[1] P. 751. [2] P. 754. [3] P. 757.

Victorian Positivists—the "Service of Man" of Cotter Morison, or the "Religion of Science" of Paul Carus—and history answers, *non tali auxilio*. It is strange that a man of Mr. Wells's vision cannot read aright this verdict of history. Cotter Morison himself acknowledged with chagrin that many who, at the bidding of the new ethic, had put off a belief in God, had not put on a belief in Humanity; and he frankly recognized the danger of intellectual and moral anarchy amongst his followers. As a one-time rationalist, Mr. Wells can hardly be unaware that the Ethical and Humanitarian Societies, which preach the gospel that he preaches, were founded to give practical effect to the teachings of rationalism. They were a despairing attempt to graft "religious" sentiment on to the sterilities of Agnosticism; and the most conspicuous thing about them is their admitted failure to appeal either to the head or to the heart of man. The essential sanity of the human race rejects the deification of Humanity, and insists that there must be a transcendental ground for the "service of human knowledge, human power, and human unity" advocated by Mr. Wells. We can conceive an Ethicist, such as Mr. Wells depicts, making the best of the painful facts of life, but we cannot imagine him giving enthusiastic service in the interests of the hypothetical progress of Humanity. Nor, indeed, could Huxley, who says:

"There would be something in talk of this kind,

if, in Chinese fashion, the present generation could pay its debts to its ancestors; otherwise it is not clear what compensation the Eohippus gets for his sorrows in the fact that some millions of years afterwards one of his descendants wins the Derby."

Man is primarily concerned with himself and with the present, and for that reason alone the religion of Humanity is unlikely ever to become the mainspring of human action. Mr. Wells raises Humanity to the altar under the sway of a naive optimism which is hardly justified by history as he writes it. Like the tyrant of old, he strolls in the garden lopping off the heads of the tallest poppies—Cæsar, Alexander, Charlemagne, Napoleon, all are made to bite the dust—and the real lesson of his history would seem to be trust in God rather than faith in man.

There is unfortunately no automatic register for the facts of history. They must pass through the mould of the historian's mind and take the impress of his personality. We know of no history in which the personal equation is so pronounced as in this work of Mr. Wells. We have here not so much a record of human affairs as the vision of an artist enraptured with the pageant of the ages; the passion of a democrat railing at kings and princes; the wail of a pacifist over the strifes of men; and in it all and through it all, the spirit of emancipation chafing at all restraint. This spirit is in some measure responsible for his attitude to the Catholic Church, but his marked anta-

gonism has deeper roots. A Church which is *semper eadem* cannot well be made to harmonize with a philosophy of change, and Mr. Wells is the Heraclitus of history proclaiming universal flux. The burden of his message is that nothing continueth in one stay—everything is in process of becoming something else. Yet, if we are to reason at all, there must be immutable principles of thought, as the most thorough-going evolutionist tacitly admits when he builds his theories upon them. The principles of Catholicism are "static" only in precisely the same way as the principles of logic, mathematics, or science are static—all alike limit the mind to the possession of truth. If for the truth she teaches the Catholic Church claims a *divine* origin, surely her claim is the more worthy of investigation. Had Mr. Wells investigated that claim instead of merely brushing it aside, he might perchance have found that unifying principle of which his *History* stands in need; he might have come to realize even more fully than the Prince of Philosophers, that "the Divine it is which holds all things together."[1]

[1] Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, XI. 8.

Printed in England.

religion did not originate from Ancestor worship
vice-versa – 13

Future and Perfection of mankind' – Milman, not
Wells 35

Tribute to Swarts 41

Luther – a Philistine of genius – in Arnold 44

Huxley on Matthew "the Pope has neither the best of
Psycho-analysts we have an explan. of Wells'

Solomon 18